United Nations A/HRC/33/28

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 August 2016

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Thirty-third session
Agenda items 2 and 3
Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Outcome of the panel discussion on the human rights dimensions of preventing and countering violent extremism

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report is being submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 30/15. It provides a summary of the panel discussion on the human rights dimensions of preventing and countering violent extremism held on 17 March 2016, during the thirty-first session of the Council.

GE.16-13357(E)

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I. Introduction

1. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 30/15, decided to convene a panel at its thirty-first session to discuss the human rights dimensions of preventing and countering violent extremism. The panel discussion was held on 17 March 2016.

2. The panel discussion was chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council and included four panellists:

(a) Nazila Ghanea serves on the Board of Trustees of the Universal Rights Group and is a member of the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Associate Professor in International Human Rights Law and Fellow of Kellogg College at the University of Oxford;

(b) Gaston Garatea. Professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, formerly held the position of Chair of the National Bureau for the Fight against Poverty in Peru and is a former member of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission;

(c) Mehreen Farooqi, Senior Fellow with the World Organization for Resource Development and Education, leads research projects that explore the capacity of local civil society organizations to promote peace and counter violent extremism and helps policymakers and communities to support programmes that build resilience against violent extremism;

(d) Ahmed Abbadi is Secretary-General of the Moroccan League of Mohammedan Scholars, Professor at Cadi Ayyad University of Marrakesh, where he teaches comparative history of religions and Islamic thought, and has served as Director of Islamic Affairs at the Ministry of Islamic Affairs of Morocco.

3. Following the introductory statement by the Secretary-General, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights delivered the opening statement. The panel discussion was moderated by the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Beatriz Londoño Soto. After an initial round of contributions by the panellists, 31 States (some on behalf of a group of countries), two intergovernmental organizations and seven non-governmental organizations (on behalf of a total of 18 non-governmental organizations) contributed to the interactive discussion.

4. In its resolution 30/15, the Human Rights Council requested that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights prepare a report on the panel discussion in the form of a summary. The present report was prepared pursuant to that request.

II. Opening statements

A. Statement by the Secretary-General

5. In his video message, the Secretary-General welcomed the discussion on the human rights dimensions of preventing and countering violent extremism. He emphasized that human rights abuses by violent extremists constitute direct assaults on the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Secretary-General

referred to the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, in which he stressed that human rights and the rule of law played a central role in preventing and countering violent extremism.

6. The Secretary-General stated that, while there could be no justification for violent extremism, its drivers needed to be examined. A religious and rights-based response addressing discrimination, ensuring good governance and providing access to education, social services and employment opportunities, had to be developed. The Secretary-General noted that such steps could help strengthen trust between State institutions and the people they served. While violent extremist groups were acting with alarming regularity, it was essential for the fight against violent extremism to fully respect human rights.

7. The Secretary-General observed that violent extremism must be addressed as an urgent human rights priority, avoiding the use of sweeping definitions of terrorism or violent extremism that encroached on human rights. He concluded that full respect for human rights and accountability for wrongdoing were essential to heal broken societies and successfully counter the threat posed by violent extremism.

II. Statement by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

8. In her opening statement, the Deputy High Commissioner noted that the Secretary-General's Plan of Action was rights-affirming, preventive and far-reaching as it focused on the broader factors that underlay localized and groundless violent extremism, sometimes conducive to violent extremism, included real or perceived discrimination and exclusion, political disenfranchisement, youth disempowerment and abuse of power. She recognized the Secretary-General's reminder that no report could disregard the human rights violations exacerbated these conditions. Preventing and countering violent extremism required mobilizing a multitude of actors from a wide range of perspectives and agents, all of such actions firmly grounded in human rights and the rule of law. The Deputy High Commissioner highlighted three core messages for responses to violent extremism that respected and protected human rights were more effective and sustainable: that responses that did not, also equality and non-discrimination were the bedrock of preventing and countering violent extremism; and (c) accountability for human rights violations and abuses was essential for finally ordering solutions to violent extremism.

9. With regard to the need for a human rights-compliant response, the Deputy High Commissioner noted that poor governance, repressive policies and practices that violated human rights constituted the breeding ground for violent extremism. The negative impact of heavy-handed counter-terrorism measures following 11 September 2001 had only widened the rift between communities, deepened distrust and generated a hateful public discourse. One of the key lessons learned was that the selective application of the label "violent extremism" only to Muslims reinforced intolerance and discrimination. She stressed that upholding respect for freedom of religion, belief, opinion and expression was fundamental to the struggle against violent extremism. It was important to safeguard the space in which civil society could voice the concerns of diverse groups and communities and in which people's involvement in decision-making could be facilitated. Any actions and measures to prevent or counter violent extremism must not be allowed to place unnecessary and disproportionate restrictions on the exercise and enjoyment of human rights.

10. The Deputy High Commissioner noted that equality and non-discrimination constituted a strong foundation for preventing and countering violent extremism. Opposite

laws and policies that combat social exclusion or marginalization were essential elements of the effective prevention and countering of violent extremism. Enhancing respect for economic, cultural and social rights by and for everyone on an equal basis was key to immunizing individuals, communities and societies against the rhetoric of violent extremism. Equal and pluralistic participation in all aspects of political and public life was essential to building cohesive societies. Respect for women's human rights and the provision of quality education based on human rights were indispensable in helping to create understanding and mutual respect between communities.

11. Furthermore, the Deputy High Commissioner referred to the Secretary-General's Plan of Action, which underscored that violent extremism must be met with accountability. Accountability measures were not only a matter of legal obligations, but also the very basis on which trust in public institutions, duty bearers and public leaders could be fostered. Counter-let: wise measures that led to human rights violations had been used as a rallying cry by violent extremists in the recruitment of new supporters. Access to justice and remedies was crucial for upholding the dignity of victims of terrorism and violent extremism, both in cases where State or non-State actors had committed the violations or the abuse. In particular, women and girls who had suffered torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence must be provided with redress, including all the support they need.

12. The Deputy High Commissioner welcomed the focus on preventing and countering violent extremism as a shift away from a "security-only" approach. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action gave new impetus to addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and to taking measures to ensure respect for human rights for all, as set out in pillars I and IV of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In conclusion, she recalled the Secretary-General's words of caution: it was important to avoid vaguely defined definitions of violent extremism that encroached on human rights. The broadening of the notion "violent extremism" to mere "extremism" was potentially destructive, and political opponents or critics of governmental action should not automatically be considered as extremists. The Deputy High Commissioner stressed that words and ideas should not be conflated with actual conduct, and that dissent and debate were essential to human progress.

III. Initial contributions of the panellists

13. The Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, who was also the moderator of the panel, opened the panel discussion. She recalled that, in its resolution 30/15, the Human Rights Council had reaffirmed that violent extremism constituted a serious common concern for all States and had noted that while there could be no excuse or justification for violent extremism, abuses and violations of human rights may be among the elements that contributed to creating an environment in which people, especially youth, were vulnerable to the kind of radicalization that leads to violent extremism and recruitment by violent extremists and terrorists.

14. After introducing the first panellist, Ms. Ghanea, the moderator asked her to explain how States and the international community should respond to violent extremism, also in view of the Human Rights Council's reaffirmation of the international obligations of States to promote and protect human rights while preventing and countering violent extremism, as well as the commitment of States to address the conditions conducive to violent extremism.

[1] General Assembly resolution 60/288.

15. Ms. Ghanea referred to Human Rights Council resolution 30/15, in which the Council emphasized that all actions to prevent and counter violent extremism must be in full compliance with international human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law. She stressed that those safeguards were crucial because otherwise the very actions aiming at preventing violent extremism would themselves risk fuelling further violent extremism. Positive investments in ensuring full compliance with article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on freedom of religion or belief could provide a bulwark against violent extremism. The important link between upholding freedom of religion or belief and inoculating against intolerance had already been made in the final document of the international consultative conference on school education in relation to freedom of religion or belief, tolerance and non-discrimination, organized by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and held in Madrid from 23 to 25 November 2001.[1] She also noted that people may be victims of discrimination on the basis of their religion or belief, but that discrimination and violence may also be carried out in the name of religion and thus be based on the religious tenets of the perpetrator.

16. Ms. Ghanea recalled that, in its resolution 16/18, the Human Rights Council had laid out a number of helpful actions such as collaborative projects in the fields of health, conflict prevention, employment, media education, training of government officials and the encouragement of the open, constructive and respectful debate of ideas. In that same resolution, it also stressed the need for non-discrimination, meaningful participation and strong efforts to counter religious profiling. Drawing attention to the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence,[2] Ms. Ghanea described a number of initiatives to counter incitement to hatred that could contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism. In the Rabat Plan of Action, the significance of respecting freedom of expression was recognized and the crucial role of religious and political leaders to act boldly, but firmly and promptly, was emphasized. The three-fold test of legality, proportionality and necessity in respect of restrictions on freedom of expression was also stressed as imperative for preventing and countering violent extremism. Related measures had to be carried out with care and attention because otherwise there was a risk of disproportion and of compromising the work of civil society organizations and communities.

17. Ms. Ghanea concluded that human rights violations could flow from overly broad responses to violent extremism. She recalled that the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism had warned that the elasticity of the term "violent extremism" could have a serious negative impact on many human rights.[3] In his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the Secretary-General had stressed the need for all legislation, policies, strategies and practices adopted to prevent violent extremism to be firmly grounded in the respect for human rights and the rule of law.[4]

18. The moderator then asked the second panellist, Mr. Garatea, in view of his expertise and experience as former Chair of the National Bureau for the Fight against Poverty in Peru, to share his views on how poverty eradication projects could be part of the national strategies to address conditions conducive to violent extremism.

19. Mr. Garatea noted that each party to a conflict had its reasons for taking part in that conflict. The search for a solution at any price was not the best way to solve disputes but

[1] See E/CN.4/2002/73, annex, appendix.
[2] See A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, annex, appendix.
[3] See A/HRC/31/65, para. 54.

rather the parties involved had to seek a solution themselves. Furthermore, those involved in extreme violence knew why they had been marginalized.

20. Mr. Garatea stressed that poverty was, to a large extent, a breeding ground for human rights violations. Therefore, every member of society, at all levels, had to become involved in efforts to eradicate poverty and everyone, including those from the poorest strata of society, had to be given opportunities to be heard. By way of example, Mr. Garatea referred to the forums and inclusive consultations that had been held in Peru since 2000, including at the national, provincial, district and neighbourhood levels. In all those consultations, poverty was the defining characteristic and common issue.

21. Mr. Garatea discussed the steps that had been taken subsequently. Affected communities in Peru had engaged in a series of more than 1,400 public consultations so that they could find solutions. Those decentralized engagements had continued in Peru and were still under way after 16 years.

22. The moderator then referred to resolution 30/15, in which the Human Rights Council stressed the need to address conditions conducive to violent extremism by engaging with all groups of civil society concerned and, in particular, by empowering women and youth. The Council also reaffirmed the important role that education, including human rights education and training, could play in preventing and countering violent extremism. The moderator asked Ms. Farooq to share her views and experience of the role that local civil society organizations could play.

23. Ms. Farooq first identified risk factors, to facilitate the detection of vulnerable individuals, including: sociological conditions (such as social alienation and acculturation difficulties); psychological factors (such as post-traumatic stress and mental illnesses); economic factors (such as unemployment and related deprivation); political grievances (such as the perception that Governments are promulgating discriminatory policies against certain communities); and ideological factors (such as intolerance and the justification of violence to address grievances). These risk factors also indicated that religious ideology alone did not lead to the radicalization of individuals.

24. Ms. Farooq said that her organization, the World Organization for Resource Development and Education, brought together public and private stakeholders to promote safety and social cohesion. Its work was based on the premise that a public that understands the threat of violent extremism and the risk factors of radicalization is better equipped to identify vulnerable individuals and can refer them for an intervention before they engage in violence. The organization has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders forming part of an early warning network and has trained hundreds of local law enforcement officers, educators and faith community members. Special programmes for youth stressed the importance of recognizing when an individual may express support for an extremist organization through social media. By placing communities at the forefront and involving multiple faith communities, programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism could give them ownership of the agenda and also reduce the stigma experienced by a single faith community.

25. In conclusion, Ms. Farooq emphasized the critical role of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, religious scholars, educators and social service providers. In her opinion, civil society was best suited to understanding the challenges of communities and could more rapidly mobilize resources to respond to their needs. Civil society entities had to be given the resources to develop their own prevention efforts. In addition, more States had to be encouraged to develop initiatives to counter violent extremism in collaboration with civil society, for example by promoting engagement with religious and tribal leaders and women's associations. Finally, community policing had to be improved worldwide so that trust could be fostered between government

officials, law enforcement and communities. Ms. Farooq argued that a paradigm shift may be required in countries that had historically focused their efforts on security measures rather than on diversion programmes or other crime prevention programmes.

26. The moderator asked the fourth panellist, Mr. Abbadi, to discuss the role that local and religious leaders could play in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, and the initiatives that were being taken or could be encouraged in order to foster tolerance and better understanding among all religions, beliefs and cultures.

27. Mr. Abbadi explained that the texts of every religion had to be interpreted in order for the religion to be placed meaningfully in the modern world context. He stressed the importance of capacity-building and of understanding the issues faced by individuals in contemporary society, including youth.

28. Mr. Abbadi noted that Morocco had developed training material to help scholars understand how to reach modern audiences. Scholars trained to interpret religious texts in a contemporary manner could promote non-violence and human rights by adopting a contextualized approach to religious teaching. Mr. Abbadi noted that the preservation of life was one of the main requirements of Islam. Scholars trained to understand the spirit and finalities of religious texts could implement them through concrete actions in favour of human rights. Mr. Abbadi explained that he had worked with children and scholars to promote non-violence and to build their capacity in this regard.

29. In conclusion, Mr. Abbadi warned that violent extremists stood ready to intervene with an ideology of fear and violence if people felt that their dreams or aspirations were not being met. Religious and local leaders had an important role to play in countering that dangerous narrative.

30. After the first round of statements by the panellists, the moderator highlighted the need for States to recognize that preventing and countering violent extremism could lead to human rights violations. She asked the panellists to discuss further how preventing and countering violent extremism could best be reconciled with human rights obligations. Ms. Ghanea agreed that preventing and countering violent extremism opened up a range of actions that could violate human rights. Yet, that risk was present in many other policy measures and the health of civil society was a good indication of whether measures to prevent and counter violent extremism were violating human rights. To play that role, religious and social organizations had to be free to operate without discrimination. Mr. Garatea highlighted the need for education and training to accompany programmes aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism. This was essential to ensure that related measures were effective while protecting and fulfilling human rights.

31. Regarding the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the moderator acknowledged that violent extremism took a myriad country-specific forms. She asked Ms. Farooq and Mr. Abbadi to discuss steps a State should take when developing for the first time a programme to prevent or counter violent extremism. Ms. Farooq pointed out that some violent extremist groups were sending as many as 40,000 tweets per day. Any direct response on behalf of the State was likely to pale in comparison. Efforts had to focus on community awareness, including community education and civil society collaboration, and it was the State's role to foster such an environment. Research had shown that civil society was already doing a lot in many regions and States did not need to reinvent the wheel but merely bolster those efforts. According to Mr. Abbadi, it was important that States consult human rights organizations when developing programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism. They should also bring in specialized lawyers to frame measures aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism in order to ensure compliance with international law. Finally, States had to develop expertise in communication to create a credible alternative to the narrative of violent extremists.

32. The moderator asked panellists to comment on the appropriate age at which children should be engaged on the subject of violent extremism. Mr. Abbadi believed that such engagement should start early but should not be in the form of a lecture. He added that it was essential to collaborate with leaders in the entertainment industry in order to develop films and games to foster a positive message. Ms. Farooq agreed that it was never too early to engage children. The programmes of the World Organization for Resource Development and Education focused on children as young as 10. Children of that age were already exposed to risk factors, including bullying and intolerance. Many positive values could not be taught, however, and an environment where children could experience such values and learn for themselves had to be cultivated. Ms. Ghanea was also of the opinion that values such as plurality, diversity and respect had to be taught to children at an early age. Encouraging children to connect with diverse communities could give them a sense of purpose, protecting them from feelings of disenfranchisement and injustice. Mr. Garatea concurred and stated that a nurturing, diverse community was a civilizing force for a child and should be encouraged.

IV. Summary of the interactive discussion with stakeholders

33. During the interactive discussion with stakeholders, contributions were made by representatives of the following States on behalf of others: Albania (on behalf of the core group on the resolution on countering violent extremism); Australia (on behalf of Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea and Turkey); Kuwait (on behalf of the Group of Arab States); Morocco (on behalf of the Platform for Human Rights Education and Training); Norway (on behalf of the Nordic countries) and Pakistan (on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation). The following States also made contributions: Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Croatia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey and United States of America. Representatives of the European Union and the Council of Europe also made contributions.

34. In addition, contributions were made by representatives of the following non-governmental organizations: Article 19 (on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, CIVICUS — World Alliance for Citizen Participation, the Association for Progressive Communications, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, the International Humanist and Ethical Union, Human Rights Watch, the Center for Inquiry, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues and the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development), Rencontre africaine pour la defense des droits de l'homme (on behalf of the Women's Federation for World Peace International and Al-Hakim Foundation), Americans for Human Rights and Democracy in Bahrain, Amnesty International, Association Miraisnie International, Global Network for Rights and Development and World Jewish Congress.

A. General observations

35. Most participants expressed support for the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and welcomed the panel discussion. Some called for concerted measures to be taken to prevent and counter violent extremism, including cooperation at the international and regional levels to develop plans built on global experiences. Noting that manifestations of violent extremism differed between regions, however, some States thought that an international plan would be difficult to develop. While many States believed that the United Nations should take the lead at the international level, others argued that

efforts should be handled nationally. One State noted that combating the global threat of terrorism and violent extremism required joint efforts by the entire international community, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of equality and sovereignty of States and of non-interference in their internal affairs.

36. It was stressed that measures to prevent and counter violent extremism must strictly adhere to the three-fold test of legality, proportionality and necessity, as outlined in the Rabat Plan of Action. In addition, one State referred to the recommendations made in the Rabat Plan of Action on mobilizing social media, the academic world and civil society to combat intolerance. There was widespread agreement that measures to prevent and counter violent extremism should be focused on human rights and the rule of law and that respect for human rights and efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism were mutually reinforcing. A number of States called for fundamental freedoms, such as freedoms of expression, religion and peaceful assembly, to be respected. Measures to prevent and counter violent extremism had to be developed within the bounds of existing international obligations.

37. Several States expressed concern that human rights defenders, civil society representatives and journalists were often targeted by violent extremists. They called for efforts to be made to protect those individuals. Furthermore, the importance of human rights training and education was highlighted. One State called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen its relationship with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

38. It was pointed out that States had a responsibility to protect individuals within their territory by addressing the root causes of violent extremism, not just by prosecuting violent extremists. The swift and stern handling of violent acts could send a message of zero tolerance, but a softer approach was also needed to counter the radicalization that led to violent extremism.

B. Calls for a holistic approach

39. There was general agreement that, in order to be successful, policies to prevent and counter violent extremism would require a holistic approach. A "security-only" strategy would fail. Governments, civil society entities, the media and local communities had to come together if conditions conducive to violent extremism were to be addressed. Moreover, a number of government institutions, including the departments of education and public health, had to work in a complementary manner. The different perspectives brought by the panellists demonstrated that collaboration across disciplines was essential. That said, civil society organizations cautioned against measures to counter violent extremism that involved the media because they could also threaten the free flow of information online; those organizations expressed serious concern about blocking access to the Internet, targeting anonymity, weakening encryption and mounting pressure on private companies to be complicit in government censorship and surveillance.

40. The importance of community resilience was raised by a number of States. Civil society was called upon to become more involved in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism as part of a holistic approach. Several States described how they had engaged community and religious leaders to foster tolerance and mutual respect. Others discussed the role of social services in preventing and countering violent extremism. Civil society participants stressed the need for human rights defenders to be included in the process. In addition, the important role of economic development was emphasized, as was the importance of social justice and harmony. One State referred to the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development" and, in that context, highlighted the need to develop a peaceful society based on good governance.

C. Defining violent extremism

41. There was general agreement that preventing and countering violent extremism were pressing needs. One State stressed that victims of violent extremism deserved justice and that the perpetrators of violent acts had to be held accountable. Some States and civil society organizations expressed concern, however, that the absence of a definition of "violent extremism" could lead to human rights violations and were of the view that reaching agreement on a definition should be the first step. Legislation and policies to prevent and counter violent extremism had already been used to quell political opposition in several regions. Overly broad or vague definitions of what constituted "extremism" or "violent extremism" could provide Governments with a tool of suppression, especially vis-à-vis those who disagreed with State policies or wished to challenge them. The lack of a definition could permit counter-terrorism programming to unduly expand and encroach on civil liberties. There was a need at least for greater delineation between terrorism and violent extremism.

42. States used the term "violent extremism" differently during the discussion, which illustrates the definitional problem. Several delegates used the term interchangeably with terrorism, whereas some characterized it as a root cause of terrorism and others believed that violent extremism could lead to terrorism but only in certain circumstances. Among those States that equated violent extremism with terrorism, one characterized violent extremism in terms of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014). Through that lens, measures to prevent and counter violent extremism were equivalent to those needed to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism outlined in pillar I of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

43. States pointed out that the issue of the definition had been raised in a report by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.[7] In an effort to help resolve the tension, some States shared information on the definitions of violent extremism that they used. For example, one State said that it understood violent extremism to be the beliefs and actions of people who support violence to achieve political goals, which sometimes, but not always, included acts of terrorism.

D. Role of human rights in preventing and countering violent extremism

44. Most States emphasized the role of human rights and democracy in preventing and countering violent extremism. Some called upon States to adhere to their obligations under international law. Upholding human rights and preventing and countering violent extremism were mutually reinforcing. One could not be pursued successfully at the expense of the other. The risk of violent extremism was higher in environments where human rights were violated, governance was poor and economic opportunities were lacking. Measures aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism had to be prescribed by law and be proportional and necessary for achieving a legitimate aim. In that regard, the United

[7] General Assembly resolution 70/1.
A/HRC/31/65.

Nations was requested to assess related measures critically against international norms to minimize the risk of human rights violations.

45. Several States discussed the role that human rights education and training should play in preventing and countering violent extremism. Such education and training included instructions on how youth should respond to violent extremism online and how best to rehabilitate and reintegrate violent extremists into society. Some States stressed that education was key and called for the promotion of tolerance and mutual respect to be part of national curricula. It was noted that the Human Rights Council, in its resolution 30/15, had reaffirmed the important role of human rights education and training in preventing and countering violent extremism. Civil society participants called for educational programmes that focused on different religions and cultures as a way to promote tolerance and understanding. It was widely agreed that education should feature prominently in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism.

46. Several States expressed concern that violent extremists used the Internet to promote hatred and instigate violence. Some States insisted that there should be a response to that threat. Others, however, warned that measures must take into consideration freedom of the press, religion and expression, pointing to the danger that measures to prevent and counter violent extremism could be used to silence dissent and political opposition.

47. A number of stakeholders highlighted the importance of the principle of non-discrimination in the context of preventing and countering violent extremism. According to one State, this required a paradigm shift in countries where security forces had traditionally defended the State or particular groups when they should have protected the fundamental freedoms and rights of everyone equally. As recognized in Human Rights Council resolution 30/15, violent extremism could not and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. It is a global problem across national borders, taking many forms and affecting multiple countries. Government policies that stigmatized specific groups under the banner of preventing and countering violent extremism were counterproductive. Even well-intended efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism could ultimately alienate communities if broad generalizations were made about its causes.

48. Several States expressed the view that violent extremists sought legitimacy from ideas resulting from marginalization. Tough questions had to be asked to understand the underlying drivers of violent extremism. Perceived injustices and the deprivation of rights were widely considered to serve the growth of violent extremism. In addition, racial or religious profiling should be rejected. Some States called for measures to combat intolerance against Muslims and a civil society participant voiced concern at measures that targeted Muslim communities. Another State urged the integration of youth and women into programmes aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism.

V. Concluding remarks

49. **In her concluding remarks, the moderator reiterated that human rights, the rule of law and democracy were key to addressing the violent extremism affecting many countries around the world. Although acts of violence cause great suffering, States must uphold human rights when engaging in measures to prevent and counter violent extremism. Such initiatives should take into consideration the needs of communities and be tailored to their particular situations rather than be imposed in a top-down manner.**

50. The moderator asked the panellists to comment on whether they regarded "violent extremism" and "terrorism" as identical. While noting that they were close relatives, Mr. Garatea believed that they were not the same because violent extremism often aimed at vengeance and breaking the status quo, whereas terrorism focused on attacking the system as such. Ms. Farooq highlighted the difference between measures to prevent or counter violent extremism and counter-terrorism: the former sought to mitigate the risk factors of radicalization that could lead to violent extremism while the latter focused on stopping individuals once they had been radicalized. Ms. Ghanea thought that efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism needed to continue despite the lack of an accepted definition; a working definition that was human rights-centric would need to emerge, however, and any definition that was taken would have to make a distinction between thoughts and actions, in line with articles 18 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Mr. Abbadi also stressed the distinction between action and thought, stressing the importance for States to distinguish "extremism" from "violent extremism". Furthermore, he emphasized the role of capacity-building and training, including for police, military and security officials, in order to put human rights front and centre in preventing and countering violent extremism.

51. Asked about the best way of protecting the rights of journalists while preventing and countering violent extremism, Ms. Ghanea noted that States had to ensure rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of the press, and secure a framework for the operation of independent media. In addition, States had to offer protection against reprisals and provide redress to those journalists whose rights had been violated.

52. The moderator acknowledged the tendency of violent extremism to be linked with certain groups and religions. Ms. Farooq noted that many people became radicalized owing to political grievances or economic conditions. Yet, even in countries where people were very observant, religion was not necessarily the prime motivator for violent extremism. She stressed that research was needed at the local level to better understand the drivers of radicalization within each specific region.

53. Mr. Abbadi recommended that States focus on human rights education, capacity-building and the training of trainers. Ms. Ghanea agreed with the view expressed by several stakeholders that preventing and countering violent extremism constituted a positive challenge for the international community in terms of creating social cohesion within societies, fostering collaboration between international and national actors and allowing the international community to pay attention not only to the inter-State and State levels but also to the community level. Ms. Farooq urged States to focus on understanding how best to operationalize a rights-centric approach to preventing and countering violent extremism, noting that funding for civil society organizations was limited and needed to be expanded, especially at the grass-roots level. Mr. Garatea highlighted the role of women in preventing and countering violent extremism.

54. Finally, the moderator recalled that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would prepare a report on best practices and lessons learned on how protecting and promoting human rights contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism (see A/HRC/33/29).